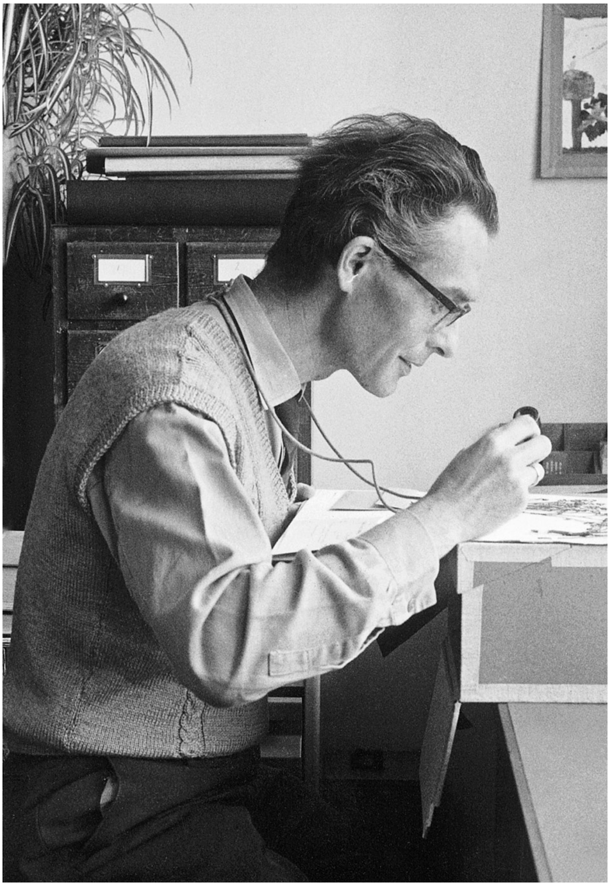
BLUMEA 49: 3–10
Published on 3 May 2004 doi: 10.3767/000651904X486160

IN MEMORIAM
PIETER WILLEM LEENHOUTS (1926–2004)

On 1 March 2004 Dr. P.W. (Piet) Leenhouts passed away: after many years of illness Parkinson's disease won. From 1947 until 1999 he had been associated with the Rijksherbarium, now the Leiden University branch of the National Herbarium of the Netherlands, first as demonstrator, from 1953 as a member of the Flora Malesiana team, and after his official retirement in 1991 as an honorary staff member. During his long career he revised Burseraceae, Connaraceae, Dichapetalaceae, Goodeniaceae, Loganiaceae and Sapindaceae for the Flora. His accuracy and great knowledge of theory and practice made him an ideal editor of *Blumea*, a position he officially held from 1973 to 1999, but which he had already carried out on behalf of the Director of the Rijksherbarium, many years before as well.



From the start his work showed two facets: Piet not only excelled in revising species and monographing families, he also placed his research in a modern theoretical and methodological framework. This is nicely demonstrated in his thesis, 'A monograph on the genus *Canarium* (Burseraceae)', which he defended in 1959. He revised all species and did not only attempt a phylogeny reconstruction based on derived characters (now called synapomorphies), but also analysed their historical biogeography. He also wrote on practical and general aspects in taxonomic practice, such as identification tables, mounting specimens and species concepts. Perhaps his most famous article, on indexing (now 'databasing') nomenclature and specimens, was published in *Regnum Vegetabile*, painstakingly describing how to design and create files on plant names, synonyms, literature references, specimens, etc. and how to integrate them. Of course, this is outdated by modern computer systems, but in the old days an extremely helpful tool.

His last major taxonomic revision for Flora Malesiana of the Sapindaceae earned Piet a certain notoriety. Especially the complex genus *Allophylus* posed a great taxonomic challenge. Because of his very precise species concept any overlap between groups of specimens resulted in a merger of taxa. For instance, two well-separable piles of specimens on the island of Java could sometimes be linked via a third pile of Bornean specimens. Some researchers would maintain three species; Piet, however, united them all and finally *Allophylus* ended up monotypic, with *A. cobbe* (L.) Raeusch. as single pantropical species. It comprised hundreds of synonyms and gave Leiden for a long time a reputation for giga-lumping. Of course, Piet was not satisfied with the result, but it was the best he could do and taxonomists after him still have to admit that any species concept in *Allophylus* is unsatisfactory.

The Sapindaceae provided Piet with many intellectual challenges. Together with Jan Muller he tried to reclassify the Sapindaceae phylogenetically. Piet investigated the morphological characters and Jan Muller the palynology of the species. Their joined publication added much body to the present classification of the Sapindaceae. Piet further developed his phylogenetic method, a kind of Wagner algorithm, and he also worked with synapomorphies and ordered characters, but the developing 'phylogenetic school' had already outdated his work. An overview of his method in comparison with other algorithms can be found in 'An attempt towards a natural system of *Harpullia*' (Sapindaceae; Blumea 31, 1985, 219–234), in fact again a joint effort with Jan Muller, who wrote the preceding article on pollen morphology and evolution in *Harpullia*. Piet always maintained that the Sapindaceae were very suitable for phylogenetic and (historical) biogeographic work. His students (Frits Adema, Brigitte Etman, Raymond van der Ham, Hubert Turner, and Peter van Welzen) proved him right, they reconstructed the phylogenies of several genera and established interesting biogeographical patterns in the process.

On first encounter Piet might strike one as a 'grey' person, modestly merging with the background. On better acquaintance you would soon discover his '(com)passionate' character. Piet was one of the friendliest persons you could ever meet. Always ready to help students, invite herbarium visitors to his house or for field excursions, etc. We never saw him angry, at most agitated. He was not a person to burst into roaring laughter,

but he had an enormous sense for dry humour. His eyes would twinkle, the corners of his mouth would rise a little and a very quick-witted and funny remark would pass his lips in a very soft spoken voice.

Piet was passionate in his work and private life. He loved Irish folk music and art, especially (modern) paintings, and he was an erudite connoisseur. This passionate hobby turned out to be highly beneficial for the National Herbarium, because Piet's interest in botanical illustrations placed him in charge of our so-called *icones* collection. He ordered and catalogued the plates and listed many biographical details about the various artists represented in the collection. He contributed to two highly successful exhibitions on botanical art and curiosities in Leiden (*De plant verbeeld*) and Franeker (*Het Botanisch Kabinet*), respectively. Thanks to Piet's baseline work on the *icones* Cees Lut, librarian of the NHN, recently received substantial subsidies to restore the most valuable ones. Part of these are now on display in museums in the Netherlands and abroad.

Piet Leenhouts was a person who disliked false pretences. He approached fellow human beings regardless of position or rank. He was also very conscientious and dependable. This made him ideal for the position of acting director, a position he held for many years during the (all too short) holidays of successive directors. Piet was also extremely adverse to overspending or wasting resources. For example, the first photocopier in the herbarium had a two-step procedure, first negatives had to be made and these in turn had to be copied into positives again. Piet found the second step a waste of time and money, thus he only ordered the negatives, black sheets with white characters in a mirrored way. You could only read them by holding them towards the light and reading from the backside. Of course these were all stored in old envelops. He had plenty of those, because he had a vast correspondence with many colleagues.

Towards the end of the Sapindaceae revision Piet's health started to deteriorate seriously, but a team effort completed the Sapindaceae for Flora Malesiana with Piet as first author of this difficult but very interesting family. We are glad that the publication of the Malesiana Sapindaceae formed a worthy completion of the scientific career of Piet Leenhouts. A person we will dearly remember.

PETER C. VAN WELZEN, FRITS ADEMA & PIETER BAAS

Eponymy

Burseraceae: *Haplolobus leenhoutsii* Kochummen
Loganiaceae: *Geniostoma leenhoutsii* B.J. Conn
Loganiaceae: *Strychnos leenhoutsii* Tirel

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by C.W.J. Lut

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